1: Ammar E, 1-5 (1951) 1954
MR13 Fellahin MR13
Silwa

FOLK LIFE AND SOCIAL CHANGE IN THE VILLAGE

Notions connected with life and death are, on the whole, mixed up with religion. To die on holy days, such as Fridays or in the month of Ramadan, is a sign of God's blessing.

Sanctity shows itself also in status and rank and their role in the community. According to the villagers, the 'ashraf' (people of distinguished descent being related to the Prophet) have a better chance of salvation than others, a notion which, of course, satisfies the villagers' ego as they consider themselves descendants of the Prophet. The persistence of the religious prerogatives of the 'ashraf' goes to show that the central conception of Islam in the equality of all believers has not entirely supplanted the Arab reverence for distinguished genealogy.

The villagers' attitude of respect for religious men is based on two principles. The first is that of knowledge of Koranic studies, combined with observation of religious duties; the second is derived from hereditary piety, as recognized piety is believed to be handed from father to son. The example of the two pious men acknowledged and venerated as such by the villagers is perhaps the best illustration. One of these two pious sheikhs is the son of the villagers' deceased saint around whose shrine the tombs of the villagers' cemetery is spread. As this sheikh does not live in the village, he frequently comes to it either for an ordinary visit, for taking part in settling serious disputes between individuals or families, or to collect his annual custom of crops offered to him by the villagers during harvest time. During his stay he moves from one guest house to another as the guest of a clan or a family which endeavours to provide hospitality for him and thus win his approval. In return, the sheikh is requested to write charms, or to bless water, or to read over a sick person, and thus secure his 'baraka'.[1]

The piety of the other religious man is based also on the fact that he is the grandson of a man who was one of the favourite disciples of the chief founder of the Nakshbadia mystic sect. His grandfather is reputed to have done miraculous deeds and had composed mystic verses usually recited amongst the members of the sect. His piety is also based on the grounds that he studied at al-Azhar Mosque and thus he is considered to be well versed in Koranic studies. It was because of his piety that he gained most of the votes in Silwa, when he stood as a candidate for the Parliament as mentioned earlier.

It is also recognized that people who know the sacred book by heart should be venerated as the carriers of knowledge, and many people regard them as possessed of 'baraka'. In Arab councils, religious men are always included, and their decisions are usually respected.

Moreover, the main events of life and death have their religious significance or at least their sanction. It is in the Prophet's tradition to celebrate the naming ceremony, to circumcise children, and to get them married.

[1] This sheikh died during my field work and a delegation from the village went to his village in condolence.

FOLK LIFE AND SOCIAL CHANGE IN THE VILLAGE

customs like the people in Silwa. The visiting priest who comes yearly to the village is certainly welcome on his arrival, and people flock to him for advice on religious matters. On attending one of these meetings, the writer was struck by the number of questions that those present put to him concerning the details of prayers, e.g. whether one lifts his hand up to his shoulder or up to his ears, how one sits on after prostration, what one might say before and after prayers. Other questions that arose were queries about whether certain sayings or deeds were considered to be religiously approved or disapproved, how and to whom one would make a sacrifice oath, whether visiting saints' tombs is a good thing or not, and so forth.

Village life, on the whole, whether in religious or social spheres, is very ritually and ceremonially conscious, and almost invulnerable on this level. Greeting, hospitality, eating, praying, exchange of social obligations, circumcision, marriage, and dozens of items of life are shrouded with ritual and traditional prescriptions. My informant, Mahmoud, told me that after a sermon given by a preacher coming from the city, who told the villagers that their customs practised on the death of a person were non-Islamic, they took a vow not to practise them any more. Yet the adherence to the oath was made for some six months, after which people gradually relapsed to their traditional ways, with the only exception that women were allowed to follow the deceased as far as the southern end of the village instead of going on to the cemetery as had been the practice hitherto.

The extent of social change on the folkhood of the village could be also examined in the villagers' ideas about sickness and disease which are mixed with ritual and religious beliefs. Disease, it is supposed, can be caused either by failure to fulfil some religious ritual or ceremony, such as a financially able man not performing his pilgrimage, or the failure to give the promised offerings to a saint, or providing a naming ceremony for a new-born baby. If saints are suspected as the cause of the disease, usually a woman known to be the guardian of that particular saint, or upon whom saints descend, would be consulted to tell whether the family has broken or forgotten a sacrificial custom. If no special saint has been offended, then bread could be specially baked and distributed as a 'karama' amongst people after the Friday prayer, asking God to relieve the sick.

Sickness can also be caused by the evil eye, and in such cases a learned man is asked to recite verses from the Koran or write a charm (higab) to be worn by the sick person as a prophylactic safeguard as well as a means of treatment. Certain diseases like paralysis are believed to be caused by the evil red wind emanating from the touch of jinn; an epileptic is also a person who is mounted and obsessed by jinn who usually haunt deserted places, wells, and high spots in the mountains. Curiously enough, tuberculosis is believed to be caused by pretence and social conceit.

Moreover, a sickness is considered as God's test for the endurance and patience of the faithful. As the faithful are always exposed to affliction, their faith in God should never be shaken, and hence their endurance of

1: Ammar E, I-5 (1951) 1954
MR13 Fellahin MR13
Silwa

THE AIMS AND METHODS OF SOCIALIZATION IN SILWA

through age and sex groups. The family does not directly play as great a part in the educative process in Silwa as in towns or cities of Egypt. An equally if not more important part is played by other children, adults other than the parents, play-groups, gossip gatherings, groups of girls going to fill their jars, or groups of boys fetching fertilizer, situations of hand-washing, tea-serving, ceremonies and celebrations, and by hundreds of other life situations which go to communicate the heritage of the village life to the growing child. In Silwa, like the Midwestern Highlands of Guatemala, 'the heritage of the group is communicated in situations much less clearly defined than institutions . . . (through) that multitude of daily situations in which by word or gesture, some part of the tradition is communicated from one individual to another'.[1] The literary and written aspects of the village Islamic culture are left to a few literary people who teach or recite the Holy Book and enlighten the other villagers on religious matters; while theoretical religious knowledge is the concern of a few, all are concerned with the ritual aspects of religion such as prayers and fasting.

Moreover, the slow rate of social change in the village has hardly affected the aims and methods of socialization. Children are reared approximately in the same way as their parents and are expected to imbibe the same cultural assumptions, and follow the same path. A qualification must be added here. Growing up in a folk homogeneous society does not necessarily mean a smooth, painless or unhampered process. But however traumatic or frustrating the life experience is, it can nevertheless be presented to each growing individual as viable, and to that extent, bearable.[2] Intensive case studies would certainly reveal the various problems of social adjustment, and show the compensatory mechanisms of those who fail to measure up to the ritual assumptions and requirements.

[1] Robert Redfield, 'Culture and Education in the Midwestern Highlands of Guatemala', in *American Journal of Sociology*, Vol. XLVIII, 1943, p. 644.

[2] Margaret Mead, 'The Implications of Culture Change for Personality Development', in *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, Vol. XVII, 1947, p. 633.

2: Blackman E-5 (1920-1926) 1927
MR13 Fellahin MR13
Upper Egypt

764 ghost of the deceased away from the village. I am told that it is merely the way of making it known that a death has taken place.

When the corpse has been washed it is wrapped in cotton or silk cloths, the first wrapping being usually white, the outer green. [822] Green is the sacred colour among Muslims, being associated with [792] the Prophet Muḥammed. His descendants, or perhaps I should say those who lay claim to be such, very often wear a green turban.

[29] [151]

FIG. 50. WOMEN WAILING OUTSIDE AN ENGINE-HOUSE, WHERE A BOY HAD JUST BEEN KILLED

Note the uplifted arms of the dead boy's mother, in the centre, a characteristic attitude of grief. See below, p. 236, and Fig. 137.

The Muslims do not bury in coffins. The corpse, when wrapped, is laid on a bier with low sides, and this is covered with a shawl by way of a pall. The sex of the deceased is indicated by slight differences in the draping of the shawl.

764 When a man or a woman dies a ram must be killed and some of 775 its blood sprinkled on the place where the death occurred. If 782 this is not done the *rōḥ* (soul) will remain in the house and cannot 805 go to heaven. If the people are too poor to afford a ram a kid is killed instead. When the father of a rich man whom I know died a ram and some other animals were killed at the house, and, [831] in addition, a camel was slaughtered near his grave and the meat distributed among the poor

2: Blackman E-5 (1920-1926) 1927
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Upper Egypt

CHAPTER XV

MUSLIM SHEIKHS AND COPTIC SAINTS

THE Egyptian peasants venerate a number of holy men and women to whom miraculous powers have been ascribed, either during their lifetime or after their death Such a holy person is given the title of sheikh. The word sheikh means literally an old man, and a man who is advanced in years is often addressed as Sheikh so and so as a term of respect. The word also signifies the head of an Arab tribe, the leading man in a village, and, finally, a learned man (*i.e.*, one learned in the sacred writings).

Certain of these holy men and women are venerated all over the country, the cults connected with them having become part of the general popular religion. But, besides these greater personages, there are innumerable local saints, who, however, often draw their devotees from localities beyond the boundaries of their villages.

However great may be the veneration paid to a saint in his lifetime, the honour he receives after his death is far greater. Among the Muslims it is the custom to erect over the grave of such a person a small whitewashed building, crowned with a dome, the outer and inner walls being usually decorated with line-drawings in colours and with inscriptions consisting of passages from the Ḳorān (see Figs. 139, 140). In many cases it is customary to provide a 'servant' (Fig. 138), or sometimes a number of 'servants,' whose salary is paid out of an endowment in land or money, augmented by the donations of those who visit the tomb. This man, or it may be a woman, is known as "the servant of the sheikh," and the office may descend from father to son. Besides the land surrounding the tomb, the sacred precincts may include a well, the water of which is supposed to be endowed with miraculous properties.

Sometimes a stone, or a heap of stones, or a tree or clump of trees, alone mark the last resting-place of a departed sheikh, but when there is a domed tomb a tree or trees are usually associated

2: Blackman E-5 (1920-1926) 1927
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with it. However, a tomb is not usually built until the dead sheikh appears to some one and demands such a building.

Most Muslim sheikhs of any standing have two or more tombs, or other burial sites, associated with them. This does not mean that the body of the sheikh is actually buried in any one of these sites, though there are many cases where this is so. A dead sheikh may appear to some man in a dream, or even when he is awake, and tell him to build a tomb on such and such a spot, and may even personally conduct him thither. It may happen that the inhabitants of a village possessing a venerated sheikh have been guilty of misconduct, or have offended the holy man by neglecting to pay him the respect which he considers his due. In such a case, it is believed, the sheikh will appear to a man in a distant village and instruct him to build another tomb. The new tomb often becomes more popular and is visited by a larger number of people than the older building. Thus a sheikh whose original tomb is in Lower Egypt may also be associated with a tomb or tombs far south in Upper Egypt.

FIG. 138. THE 'SERVANT' OF THE SHEIKH SAYID

Candles, or money with which to buy them, form a favourite offering. Such lights are kept burning every night in some sheikhs' tombs; in others they are perhaps burned on one night only in the week, usually a Friday. A number of votive offerings are generally found hanging on a cord or cords stretched across the interior of the building. The gifts display great variety, including glass

THE FELLĀḤĪN OF UPPER EGYPT

and bead bracelets, bunches of human hair, handkerchiefs, first-fruits of the cornfields, and so on. Each one registers an answered prayer, for the people flock in crowds to these tombs on certain days of the week—usually Thursdays or Fridays—generally to make some special request, or with the object of being freed from some disease, which they believe the sheikh can cure. A childless woman, or persons possessed by *ʿafārīt*, will come to beg the sheikh to intercede for them. Indeed, the performances of certain rites at the tomb may in themselves effect a cure.

Having removed his or her shoes before entering the building, the visitor then walks from left to right round the catafalque erected beneath the dome three, five, or seven times, reciting meanwhile special passages from the Ḳorān. These perambulations accomplished, the servant of the sheikh takes a broom, kept for this special purpose, and carefully brushes out all the footprints in the interior of the building.

Sick animals are also brought by their owners to a sheikh's tomb, round which they are driven seven times.

In one of the provinces of Upper Egypt, on the lower desert, stands the domed tomb of the sheikh Ḥasan ʿAli (Fig. 139). It is surrounded by a low mud-brick wall, which encloses a few small trees, a well, and two or three graves, wherein relatives of the dead sheikh lie buried. Pots of *ṣabr* (aloes) also decorate the sacred spot, for this plant is believed to bring happiness to the dead. The building is whitewashed, and is decorated with line-drawings in red and blue, illustrating the pilgrimage to Mecca. The surrounding desert is covered with the graves of more ordinary folk. These are marked by heaps of sand, into which are stuck branches of palm-trees, for palm-branches, like the aloe-plants, are believed to be the means of conveying happiness to the dead who lie beneath.

The sheikh Ḥasan ʿAli was only eighteen years old when he died, but from his earliest years he was noted for his piety. He was educated at a small school in his native village, and, as soon as he had learned to read, he spent all his leisure moments studying the Ḳorān. When he died he was buried in an ordinary grave in the lower desert among his dead fellow-villagers. However, one day, when old ʿAli (his father) was squatting on a *maṣṭabeh* (see p. 32), with his head resting on his hand, his dead son appeared before him and caught hold of him by the wrist, saying, " I am very angry."

His father said, " Why are you angry, my son ? "

THE FELLAHIN OF UPPER EGYPT

964 The mother of this sheikh, who was very devoted to her son, did not survive him for many years. I was present at her funeral, which was attended by a large crowd of friends and relatives. She was buried in a grave near the tomb of her saintly son.

● 792 158 The sheikh ʿAbdu ʾl-Laṭīf lived in a small village in Middle Egypt, where some of his family still reside. An old man, the son of the sheikh's paternal uncle, is well known to me.[1] The sheikh ʿAbdu ʾl-Laṭīf was, in his lifetime, looked upon as a *walī*.[2] Insanity is the usual qualification for this high standing among the Muslim saints of Egypt, persons thus afflicted being regarded as the favourites of God. The sheikh had a habit of entering the houses of the people at night, after the doors had been locked, and while the evening meal was being cooked; for locked doors formed no barriers to the egress or ingress of this holy man. On entering [264] he would immediately eat up all the food; meat, bread, and vegetables, no matter how large the quantity, would all be devoured on the spot. Any glass bottles that happened to be lying about might be included in this repast, for these he would bite up and [152] swallow without drawing any blood. There was only one thing he feared, and that was water. If anyone threw a few drops of water at him he would run away in terror, as fast as his legs could carry him. My informant remembered him well, and he told me that on one occasion the sheikh entered his house after the entrance door had been securely locked and ate up all the food, including soup prepared for the evening meal.

792 766 778 [769] When the sheikh died hundreds of people attended his funeral, and, being a very good man, he made his bearers walk quickly to the grave.[3] Above it has been erected the usual domed tomb; it is situated near that of the venerated sheikh Umbārak (Fig. 140) for whom a *mūlid*, or festival, is held once every year.[4]

769 688 One year, on the occasion of this festival, a man climbed on to the outside of the tomb of the sheikh ʿAbdu ʾl-Laṭīf without first removing his shoes. Some of the people standing round remonstrated with him for this act of irreverence, but he replied, "Who is the sheikh ʿAbdu ʾl-Laṭīf? He is nobody!" and refused to climb down or to take off his shoes. However, when he wanted

[1] At the moment of writing this I received a letter from Egypt telling me of this old man's death. He is the same man who divorced his wife by the triple [586] divorce, described in Chapter V, pp. 95 f.

[2] *Walī* means 'friend' (*i.e.*, of God), and a Muslim saint is commonly so designated.

[3] See Chapter VII, p. 113.

[4] See Chapter XVI, pp. 252 ff.

THE FELLĀḤĪN OF UPPER EGYPT

During the sheikh ʿAbdu ʾl-Laṭīf's lifetime he was visited on one occasion by the sheikh Sulimān, who resided in a village some miles distant. Wherever he went the sheikh Sulimān was always accompanied by his faithful servant. On the occasion of this visit the two sheikhs conversed together in an unknown language. This roused the curiosity of the sheikh Sulimān's servant, who after the interview asked his master what they had been talking about. The sheikh told him that ʿAbdu ʾl-Laṭīf had remonstrated with him for coming to his village and had bade him remain in his own neighbourhood. Doubtless jealousy was at the root of this ill-feeling.

A few days later the servant noticed very early in the morning that his master's fingers were all burned at the tips. He immediately questioned him as to the cause of this injury, and the sheikh told him that it was his custom to go every night to all the sheikhs' tombs in the neighbourhood and light candles for them, and that while he was engaged in this pious work his fingers were burned.

The sheikh Sulimān is now dead, but his piety is still remembered. He is buried in his native village, but six other tombs are erected to his memory in various parts of the country. Moreover, the inhabitants of his village hold a *mūlid* every year in his honour.

In one of the provinces in Upper Egypt, close to the desert hills, lived the sheikheh Ṣulūḥ. This woman had, during her lifetime, a great reputation for holiness, and people flocked to her, in times of difficulty, from all quarters. Her skin was very dark from constant exposure to the sun, and her head, on which she wore no veil, was covered with a crop of hair, thick and long like the wool of a sheep; from beneath her brows peered dark, sharp-looking eyes. Her clothes were scanty, consisting merely of a piece of linen rag and a sort of coat. She remained out in this desert solitude all day, and at night, so I was told, slept alone "in the mountain." As I have explained, the people call the often precipitous high-desert hills the mountain (*el-gebel*), so she probably took shelter in one of the natural or artificial caves which exist in great numbers in the hillsides.

On one occasion, when a number of men and women had come to consult her, one of the former asked her what had become of his most valuable camel, which he had lost. The sheikheh at once told him the exact hour in which this loss had occurred, and in-

MUSLIM SHEIKHS

formed him that one of his sons had stolen it and had sold it to a man in another village in the same province. She then told him the name of the man who had bought it, and said that if he went to the house of the purchaser he would be able to recover his lost property.

I was told that this information proved to be true, and the man eventually got back the camel which he had lost.

Another man then came forward, and when he had presented the sheikheh with a small sum of money she told him his name and the name of his village, though he was quite unknown to her. She also informed him that he had three sons and one daughter—a perfectly correct statement—and said, moreover, that on his return home he would find that his daughter was ill, this information also proving to be true.

This woman died two or three years ago, and crowds flocked to her funeral, men of all ranks coming to do her honour.

A certain Sheikh Ṣabr is buried in a small village in Middle Egypt, and a tree only marked his resting-place. This tree, which was large and very old, was blown down in 1926. I inquired if a tomb would now be built over the grave, but I was informed that probably no such building would be erected until the sheikh had appeared to some one and commanded him to build for him a domed tomb. I had visited this village on several occasions before the disaster occurred to the sacred tree, and was fortunate enough to secure some good photographs of it. The tree stood at the end of the village, and devotees who came to beg the sheikh to intercede for them so that they might obtain some special benefit, or who wished to be cured of headache or other ailments, would knock a nail into the trunk and then usually twist some of their hair round the nail. A cure, so it was believed, would follow this act. The nails must be virgin-nails—*i.e.*, not used before—and must be of native manufacture. Childless women also visited the tree to be cured of their barrenness. The sheikh Ṣabr is very highly venerated, and a *mūlid*, described on p. 256, is held in his honour once a year.

All these sheikhs were poor men, and the veneration shown to them is due to the virtues they displayed and to their supposed miraculous powers. The high esteem in which they hold their local saints is really good for the peasants, as it sets them some standard of conduct, and gives them a higher ideal of life than mere moneymaking and material success.

2: Blackman E-5 (1920-1926) 1927
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THE FELLĀḤĪN OF UPPER EGYPT

Coptic saints receive the appellation Māri (Saint), and many of the beliefs and ceremonies associated with them are similar to those connected with the Muslim sheikhs.

A Coptic saint is usually buried within the precincts of a monastery or church, which may be dedicated to him. A popular saint may be honoured by the dedication of numerous monasteries and churches to his memory, in all of which he is equally venerated.

Sometimes the same saint may be claimed by Muslims and Copts alike, in which case the grave is often situated in an open space, possibly under the shadow of a tree or trees, the lower branches of which are covered with votive offerings contributed by the followers of both religions. With the Christians as well as with the Muslims candles are a favourite form of votive offering, and when the saint is claimed by the adherents of both faiths their candles may be seen burning side by side.

Many years ago, on a spot in the cultivation in Upper Egypt where a church dedicated to Māri Mīna el-ʿAgayebi now stands, there was a square plot of *ḥalfa*-grass. This site was claimed by the Muslims as the burial-place of a sheikh. There was a very poor man who lived in the town adjoining these fields and who acted as *farrāsh*[1] at the sugar factory in the same town. One night while he was sleeping he felt some one give him a kick. This naturally aroused him, and he saw standing beside him a man whose face and form were of great beauty, and who was clothed in white garments. This man told the poor *farrāsh* that he was Māri Mīna el-ʿAgayebi, that he wished him to build a church, and that he would himself indicate the spot on which he wished it to be erected. The saint told the *farrāsh* that he had called him to do this work instead of a rich man, as the latter would boast that by his riches he had built the church, whereas the saint himself would supply the poor man with all that he needed for the erection of the sacred building.

Māri Mīna then led the *farrāsh* to the patch of *ḥalfa*-grass in the fields, and told him to measure two metres from the edge of the *ḥalfa*-grass toward the east and two metres from the edge of the *ḥalfa*-grass toward the west. Then he was to dig the whole plot thus measured out to a depth of two and a half metres. When

[1] Literally, sweeper—the title given to servants employed by the Government to keep the Rest-houses clean, also to men employed in other public buildings in the same capacity.

2: Blackman E-5 (1920-1926) 1927
MR13 Fellahin MR13
Upper Egypt
Coots MR10

managed to secure a good photograph of them and of their bearers as they stood grouped under the sheikh's tree together with a few musicians and the inevitable crowd (Fig. 145).

These *mawālid*, when well conducted, are quite harmless, and are one of the very few pleasurable excitements enjoyed by the peasants. Most of those at which I have been present have been quite orderly, but much depends on the officer in charge of the district in which

FIG. 145. SHEIKH'S BANNERS AND THEIR BEARERS

they are being held. If he is neglectful, and does not see that order is kept and objectionable shows prohibited, the festivals can degenerate into anything but wholesome recreation for the people.

The modern Egyptian *mawālid* show striking resemblances to English fairs, especially as celebrated during the Middle Ages and on into the seventeenth century. These too were associated in every case with a saint, and also with trading. Our modern fairs, though often still named after the saints in whose honour they were originally held, have now lost their religious significance.

A monastery in Middle Egypt situated on the high-desert edge, which at this spot approaches close to the Yūsuf Canal, is one of a number dedicated to Māri Girgis, our St George (Fig. 146). The

2: Blackman E-5 (1920-1926) 1927
MR13 Fellahin MR13
Upper Egypt
COPTS MR10

cliff on which the monastery is built towers up above the canal, while behind the building, and outside its surrounding walls, lie two fairly large cemeteries, one Christian and the other Muslim. The present building stands on an ancient site, and many of the old walls of the church and religious houses around it are of great thickness. A considerable portion of the old walls which surround the whole settlement still remain intact, and stories are told of the miraculous powers attributed to them. This monastery, as the massive character of the ancient walls indicates, must have served

FIG. 146. A MONASTERY DEDICATED TO ST GEORGE

as a stronghold for the Christians, who built it when religious wars raged between them and the Muslims. One or two pillars preserved in the more modern church are, so I was told, relics from an ancient building which has perished.

The annual festival held here in honour of St George attracts a great number of people, who flock to the monastery from considerable distances. It is interesting to observe that the crowds which congregate within the monastery precincts are composed of quite as many Muslims as Christians. Except for the fact that there was no *ziḥr*, the proceedings were much the same as those of the Muslim festivals described above. The same trading went on, and similar musical and other entertainments were provided. This *mūlid* continues for a week, and during the last few days horse-racing and displays of fancy riding take place. Many of the visitors

754 with the pre-Islamic and pre-Christian magic of Ancient Egypt.(41)

This affinity is confirmed by the faith of the fellaheen in everything that represents itself to be ancient, primitive, *qadîm*. For many of their superstitious beliefs they can give
792 no other reason. Why is a Coptic monk preferred as a
842 sorcerer? Why should the touching of ancient statues
777 make a woman conceive? Why should a pebble or written charm from the sorcerer give effect to a wish? Because it is *qadîm*. Because it holds in itself the power of the past.

764 The function of women mourners is also traditional. A
[765] fellah dies. At once loud cries from the womenfolk announce it to all the neighbourhood. The common bier is fetched from its place near the *gurn* outside the village. Women wash the body in warm water within the house, while outside rise the wailings of the mourning women.

In their funeral cries they boast of the beauty and fine qualities of the departed, they reproach God for taking him, they call to the dead man, to his wife and children, they cry out to Death itself. These complaints seem natural and improvised. In fact they are no more so than the tears of
[767 the professional mourners, wrapped in great veils (*milayas*)
535 specially for this ceremony, their face coloured black or blue as a sign of mourning, their heads sprinkled with mud. Leading the womenfolk in a ghastly dance, they rise, clap their hands, sway about and fall exhausted, now slackening, now hurrying their cries. Here the women take first place. The men put in an appearance, both at the funeral and on the visit of sympathy, for death is a part of public life. But they participate only by their presence; they say nothing. In silence they follow the bier, clasp the hand of the nearest relation, stay seated for some time by the dead man's house, and make their way home again(42).

533 Other occasions, less frequent but more joyful, bring the
538 fellaheen together for music and story-telling. The man who brings them these hours of pleasure is the *sha'ir*, reciter, storyteller and singer all in one. He is himself a fellah, but an exceptionally gifted one. It is his melodious voice that has singled him out for the musician's life, but he also ac-
[534] companies himself on the *rebâba*, a single-stringed, sharp-toned violin. He will sing the praises of Mohammed or Jesus, describing the Prophet's appearance in naive, highly-

2.

Trust in Allah.

339

Ya ʿēni, wel-miʿēn Alla
wes-Seiyide u-rigāl Alla;
we-ramēt el-ḥiml ʿalēk, yalla.

Thou, mine eye, Allah is the helper
And the Lady and the men of Allah;
And on thee have I cast the burden, O Allah!

[192] 1. "Mine eye" is a frequent term of affection, equivalent to "my darling". Here, perhaps, the father is speaking to the son.

2. The "Lady" is the lady Zēnab, the Prophet's granddaughter, whose greatly esteemed mosque lies in south Cairo.

[192] The "men of Allah" are the saints (shêkhs), whose graves lie scattered throughout the land.

3.

Exhortation to Prayer.

[182] *Ya ʾalbi, ṣalli wimdaḥ Moḥammed*
illi ṣalato manaʿit guhannim.

Pray, my heart, and praise Moḥammed,
Whose prayer has put away hell.

2. From pious Moslems.

8:Schaefer A-5 (1900-1901) 1904
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Upper Egypt

×539 And when ye sing: "O Moḥammed!",
782 Go ye and come ye [— O Moḥammed].
But whoever fails to say: "O Moḥammed!",
Will lie, some morning, slain [— O Moḥammed],
In the bean-field, [— O Moḥammed].
He and his mother and the wife of his uncle!
[O Moḥammed].

1—4. Invocation of the Prophet Moḥammed.

2. "By Allah" is used to confirm the truth of what follows in the song.

[792] 3. Rāma is, according to Maḥmûd, a name of the mother of the Prophet.

5. Addressed to companions.

[192] [776] 8. "Go ye and come ye" is, of course, to be completed with: bis-salāme, "in safety". The road to the excavations is often long and the peasant-boy's imagination pictures ḥarāmiye (thieves) and 'afārit (evil spirits) lurking about everywhere. There is, in Cairo, a proverb, which runs: kullē ḫarâbe welina fiha 'afrit, "In every ruined house there lurks for us an evil spirit." In order to understand this proverb, it is necessary to remember, that in the native quarters of oriental cities, [362] [172] half or totally ruined houses are a much more frequent sight than with us. Moreover, Abu Gūrâb (the ruin of the sun-temple, see page II) before our excavations, was regarded as full of evil spirits.

[241] [262] 11. In the spring, wide stretches of land are covered with the tall fûl plant or hog's bean. In Egypt this bean is an important element in the nourishment of man and beast. Compare No. 14, l. 2.

12. He involves with him in his ruin, even his dearest relatives.